DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 161 CS 213 248

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TITLE Classroom Stories: Teachers' Use of Collaborative Learning.
PUB DATE 21 Mar 92
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (43rd, Cincinnati, OH, March 19-21, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Learning; Higher Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Teaching Methods; *Writing Instruction; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS Collaborative Writing; *Process Approach (Writing); Teacher Surveys

ABSTRACT

A 1991 survey questioned 61 teachers on the ways they were using collaborative learning to teach composition. Comparisons with a 1988 survey showed that the biggest increase was in the use of collaborative drafting strategies. Increases also occurred in focusing, prewriting, and editing, and there were slight decreases in revision and proofreading. The narratives of three teachers regarding their use of collaborative learning provides comparisons with the survey's statistics. Five suggestions for improving pedagogy include: (1) increase time spent on collaborative activities at the beginning stages of the writing process; (2) teach students the social skills necessary in groups; (3) form faculty support groups to synthesize current knowledge and exchange successful strategies; (4) directly address student resistance to group work; and (5) do not sacrifice groups' processing activities to cover more content. (Three tables of data are included; 21 references, 4 tables of data, and a list of the concerns and advantages of collaborative learning are attached.) (Author/RS)

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Classroom Stories:
Teachers' Use of Collaborative Learning

Hallie S. Lemon

Abstract

This 1992 CCCC paper presented the results of a 1991 survey of 61 teachers on the ways they were using collaborative learning to teach composition. First noted were comparisons with the 1988 survey (ERIC ED 294 221); the biggest increase (+31% to 82%) was in the use of collaborative drafting strategies by the teachers surveyed. There were also increases in focusing (+21% to 77%), prewriting (+7% to 84%), and editing (+6% to 75%) but slight decreases in revision (-3% to 79%) and proofreading (-2% to 67%). The major portion of the paper presents the narratives of three teachers as their responses are compared with the survey's statistics on the use of collaborative learning: **Source of Knowledge**, **Successes** and **Problems**. The paper concludes with five suggestions for improving pedagogy: 1) increase the amount of time spent in collaborative problems at the beginning stages of the writing process, 2) teach students the social skills necessary in groups, 3) form faculty support groups to synthesize current knowledge and exchange successful strategies, 4) directly address student resistance to group work, and 5) don't sacrifice groups' processing activities to cover more content. Original handouts and List of Related Readings are included.

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Classroom Stories:
Teachers' Use of Collaborative Learning

Hallie S. Lemon
Presentation at CCCC March 21, 1992

When Andrea Lunsford was one of the main speakers at Penn State's 1985 Conference, she and Lisa Ede were in the middle of their research on the ways collaboration was being used in the workplace, so Andrea asked us to tell her how we were using collaborative learning in our composition classes. That prompt, if you will, has kept me interested ever since. The results of my first survey are in ERIC; today, I'm reporting on a combination of surveys, interviews, and conversations which provide a five-year comparison with the original. I will offer three typical narratives or testimonies for collaboration, one from each group of teachers surveyed at Western, to verify the statistics, and finally, suggest five ways to improve collaborative work.

Beginning with the first Table on the handout (Appendix 1), you will see that the most dramatic increase comes in collaborative production of texts, (something Erika Scheuer, the third speaker of this session at 1992's CCCC, also addressed) and increases in all of the earlier stages of the process as well.

Table 1: Tabulation of the surveys from the Western Illinois University Composition Faculty (30), Indiana Teachers of Writing Session (15), K-12 Teachers in School District #38 (16) compared with results of surveys taken in 1986 (ERIC ED 294 221).

Use of Collaborative Strategies to Teach Composition	1986 (N=71)	1991 (N=61)	Comparison
Prewriting	76% (54)	84% (51)	+ 7%
Focusing/Thesis	56% (40)	77% (47)	+ 21%
Drafting	51% (36)	82% (50)	+ 31%
Revision	82% (58)	79% (48)	- 3%
Editing	69% (49)	75% (46)	+ 6%
Proofreading	69% (49)	67% (41)	- 2%

You can see also that collaborative learning is being used extensively at all stages of the process. The increased popularity of collaborative strategies to teach composition in the past five years coincides with an increase of articles about its use. However, a few have given up at revision or are using it less; T. A. is one of them.

The three characters in my little dialogue this morning are T. A.(Teaching Assistant), a newly remarried, non-traditional student with two small children, C. S. (short for Composition Specialist although I could have called her P.T. for Permanent Temp, as our Provost has started to), a faculty wife and artist who went through our graduate program and has been teaching full time since 1987, and T.-T. P., for Tenure-Track Professor, who came to Western from the University of Indiana and began with two sections of the second-semester research-oriented 102 course. Spring of 1991, 28 of the 95 sections of freshman composition at Western were taught by 14 Teaching Assistants; the remaining 67 sections were taught by 27 Composition Specialists. Although none of the tenured or tenure-

track faculty were teaching a freshman composition course in spring of 1991, I asked eight to fill out surveys, all of whom have taught it recently. Of the seven who returned the survey, the four tenured professors include the Director of Writing and the Director of the University Writing Exam, the other three are tenure-track.

First, how do teachers of composition learn about Collaborative Strategies (Table 2)? T. A. taught her first composition classes in Spring of 1990. She observed one of my group sessions, and we talked and exchanged written questions and answers. "The only information [on collaborative strategies] I had was from you, Hallie; I was uncertain of my methods, experimenting. ....[Harvey] Weiner ['s article] opened my eyes to group/ collaborative work. As a student, I am much too busy to read extensively. I pick up bits and snatches from textbooks and sourcebooks [a colleague] has given me. [I am using more collaborative strategies this year than last] and I am much more confident, informed. I feel I've learned from reading but mostly trial and error. I consider what I want my students to learn, what <u>will</u> work in groups, what will reinforce, what will add spice. Many activities I have simply created to fit my assignments and directions in my curriculum."

C. S. added, [I gained my knowledge] "from you, Hallie, from reading and research and workshops, and from years of experimenting in the classroom and talking to other teachers." She, too, stressed the importance of trial and error in developing successful

collaborative teaching strategies.

T.-T. P.'s knowledge of collaborative teaching strategies comes from the work of Shirley Brice Heath, Deborah Tannen, David Bleich, Bahktin and various feminist theorists. She arranges her groups usually alphabetically with minor adjustments for gender balance during the first or early second week of class; the groups of four are consistent for the entire semester.

Table 2: Source of Knowledge of Collaborative Strategies

	T.A.(5)	C.S.(20)	T.&T-T.(7)	Total
Secondary sources*	4	19	6	29
Colleagues	2	19	6	27
Workshops and Conferences (Some given by colleagues)	1	7	4	12
Experience, Serendipity, Trial and Error	3	7	1	11
Other (Classes [3], working with JPTA, women's consiousness-raising workshops, research for dissertation)				6

*Weiner (4), Bruffee (4), Lunsford and Ede (3), Bleich (2), Bakhtin, Elbow, Heath, Jaques, Spears, Tannen.

My hypothesis in asking this question was that most of us had originally tried collaborative strategies because we knew our colleagues had used them successfully. In fact, if you consider that three in the the third category mentioned workshops by colleagues, **Colleagues** could be 30 while **Secondary Sources** remained at 29, and my hypothesis would be proved correct. However, I was surprised at how many could quote a specific secondary source which informed their practice although I wouldn't have guessed that Weiner's prescription for evaluating successful collaborative learning classrooms would be the first source listed.

T. A. is representative here and says, "I frequently create handouts to act as a textual guide for group work/analysis. These

are generally very successful, require one or two class periods, encourage participation, and aid in the learning process. Some group work must be done outside of class. So far my students have willingly accomplished this. My students are cooperating and enjoy collaborating; they admit they learn more. Overall I find group/collaborative work that is directed far more effective in teaching than all the lectures or conferences I could possibly plan, deliver, or hold."

C. S. thinks, "Peer pressure, in the positive sense, improves papers. This is especially effective in 100 and 101 [WIU's two introductory writing courses]. The teacher must keep her mouth shut, must circulate, must enforce participation. Teach students how to respond; modeling is very helpful. Emphasize the positive rather than the negative. [The main successes are] a dramatic improvement in focus, development and accuracy. Small group conferences have been quite effective for me. I'm planning to research and write about them."

T-T P writes," I have used collaborative learning strategies almost exclusively in the writing of 'response statements' on fairly controversial socio-political topics (gender, racial/ethnic identity, socio-economic class, sexual orientation). More than anything else, the factor that determines the success or failure of this initiative is the level of student involvement. Students are asked to read each other's essays carefully, to note certain features about the writer's handling of language and to observe the way in which attitudes toward that particular topic have been

expressed. I tell my students that they need to annotate their classmates' writing as if it were a text as important as any other conventional text they are using in their coursework."

Table 3: Successes in the Use of Collaborative Strategies

	T.A.(5)	C.S.(20)	T&T-T(7)	Total
Invention, generating ideas, reinforcing assignments	4	7	4	14
Peer responses to drafts	1	7	1	9
Sense of community	0	5	2	7
Increases self-esteem, responsibility	1	3	2	6
Sense of audience	0	2	2	4
Other: Better papers (3), Story Drawer (2), Synthesis (2), collaborative research groups, makes teacher talk less, preparation for working with groups on the job				10

You'll note that this list in Table 3 coincides with the student responses at the bottom of the handout (Appendix 1). Both note generation of ideas as the greatest success of collaboration. I have also included in Appendix 1 a Bonus Handout listing the many successes found in an Illinois Association of Teachers of English workshop in Fall of 1992. Fewer of my colleagues at Western have noted the psychological and social benefits found by the IATE participants. They have concentrated more on the results they see in the products of the collaboration, the papers.

After the dialogue for Table 4, I have five specific suggestions for solving some of these problems; T. A. notes, "My major problem in doing group work is encouraging students with drafts. I no longer ask students to bring drafts in to class as I found so many of them intimidated by the act of sharing 'unfinished' writing with their group. Instead I often have

students analyze 'finished' papers and suggest areas that need improvement. Then I allow revision if the group thinks this is necessary. The final choice is up to the individual. I have yet to devise a better system." T. A. also mentioned that her students were often too nice to one another.

C. S. doesn't admit any problems as such but is one of the few who mentioned training the groups. "Train the groups. Treat anxiety immediately. Spend time teaching listening skills: what does listening sound like? (Hmmm, Yes). What does listening look like? (Leaning forward, looking at the reader, nodding your head in agreement or disagreement). Make members accountable to each other. I like to have an organizer, a grammarian, an image maker, etc. in each group. I also like a mix of abilities. Once groups are adjusted, we keep the same groups. The resulting bonding and accountability is very effective.

T.-T. P., however, states, "In practice, the results have been quite mixed. Attendance is a major problem. The entire notion of group work is destroyed when even a few students are absent. My use of group work requires that the group memberships be consistent throughout the semester--no musical chairs. Too many times I have encountered a 'group' of one person because the other members were absent."

"Another issue is the tendency of some students to trivialize group work. The tendency in the academy to have large classes taught through lecture (as opposed to discussion or some other social/interactive model) is so entrenched that I believe many

students are suspicious of any kind of collaborative approach to teaching. If the teacher puts the students into groups, it is possible that the teacher is seen as "lazy" or as not doing his/her job. In any case, I believe that students are suspicious of group work and don't always take it seriously, because they interpret the move to decentralize the classroom as an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher. Ultimately, group work does not ask much of students; it does, however, ask them to behave in socially responsible and accountable ways, to pay attention to the classroom as a social place, and to become sincerely involved in the business of learning. But as long as some students continue to prefer what ...[is] described as the "banking concept" of education (and I am convinced that some students actually prefer this pedagogical style because it requires very little of them in terms of responsibility and initiative), I think collaborative learning will meet with mixed results...."

Table 4: Problems in the Use of Collaborative Learning

	T.A.(5)	C.S.(20)	T&T-T	Total
Lack of responsibility to each other, not doing fair share	1	9	5	16
Keeping groups on task	4	6	3	13
Grouping problems	1	5	2	8
Time management, saving time for debriefing, time-consuming	0	5	2	7
Reluctance to criticize	1	3	2	6
Resistance to group work, not taking it seriously	0	3	2	4
Other: Pooling of ignorance (2), absenteeism (2), noise level, problems with use for reading comprehension, difficult to sustain in a computer lab without a network				7

I will address these problems in just a second, but first, I

find it strange to run across articles encouraging teachers to make use of collaborative learning strategies such as the Rau and Heyl article in April 1990's Teaching Sociology; I would say that these articles are a little late as far as teachers of composition go. I had a very hard time finding anyone who is teaching writing that doesn't use it; in fact, the Director of our University Writing Exam, which is required of all students to graduate, asked me recently what should be done about the exam in light of the extensive use of collaborative learning in writing classes. Students have been trained to talk over their writing with someone else, so the solitary-exam situation is not a typical writing test.

To conclude by looping you back into your classrooms, I will identify five areas which would help to make composition teachers' use of collaborative learning strategies more effective:

1) **More time spent in groups at the beginning rather than the later stages of the writing process.** This is an obvious one; both teachers and students agree that this is where most of the successes of collaborative learning occur. Do a Lead/Thesis/Plan workshop instead of a draft workshop, for example. Since this has been my hypothesis for some time, I would like to offer three theoretical justifications for this suggestion in addition to the responses of teachers and students: George Hillocks in Research in Composition proved that focused inquiry techniques are the most effective strategy in improving the quality of writing, Muriel Harris' study of one- and multi-draft writers would suggest that work at the invention stage would help one-draft writers consider

more options before they commit to writing and help multi-draft writers get their drafts ready for an audience sooner, and Lunsford and Ede's research on collabortion in the workplace showed most of the collaborating occurring in the early stages of the process.

2) **An awareness on the part of teachers that we are teaching social skills as well as writing skills**. More teachers need to familiarize themselves with the more structured processes in Johnson and Johnson or Kagan. We also need to hear the stories of successful teachers such as C.S. who show their students how to listen and use the roles in grouping. One suggestion is to assign a group Ethnographer to monitor the group's process. Two colleagues who used this suggestion this semester mentioned that they thought the Ethnographer was one key to the improvement in their groups. You can also have the students role-play successful and problematic group situations or do observation circles.

3) **More synthesis of the work that has already been done**. None of the people surveyed mentioned Thia Wolf's study in The Teacher as Researcher which shows that the socializing may actually be part of a successful group's process.

We need to exchange helpful essays and reports on conference sessions as well as Monday morning practices. Theodore Sheckel's presentation on Thursday (CCCC 1992) outlined the various types of talk in addition to Task Talk that help a group function. In the 1992 CCCC session preceding this one, Robert Brooke explained a theory of role negotiation which would help us understand our groups better. If much of our knowledge is coming from colleagues,

then we need to get those colleagues together into more formal study groups such as the Collaborative Learning Across the Curriculum (CLAC) support group which we have formed on Western Illinois University's campus this fall. I am afraid many teachers try a collaborative project without structuring in interdependence or doing group processing, fail, and give up on the pedagogy.

4) **Directly addressing students' resistance to group work**. Two years ago, Angela Vietto told us that the Penn State students that she had surveyed felt that the use of collaborative learning was so teacher-oriented: only the teachers knew what they wanted and the students could only speculate. Its use was reinforcing the concept that the teacher was the seat of knowledge. (Zuang-Zhong Lehmberg, the second speaker in this session confirmed this in giving reasons why the Teaching Assistants she observed were using collaborative learning.) As cooperative learning strategies become more popular in the elementary and secondary grades, surely this resistance will fade because the students have used other models of learning besides the banking concept. In the meantime, why don't we bring this resistance out into the open, discuss our strategies, and show some proof of collaborative learning's extensive use and effectiveness. Even a very short debriefing by the students after each project, either singly or in groups, lessens this resistance.

5) **Addressing students' lack of responsibility to each other**. Group processing, which is having the groups evaluate the way the group functions and is a metacognitive skill that increases the students' self-esteem, is still not practiced by many college

teachers. We sacrifice this aspect to "cover the content." Two years ago at CCCC, Diane Rawlings mentioned having her poorer group listen to the tapes of the more successful group (who was led, by the way, by a girl who had worked successfully in groups in high school). Even those of us who are aware of the importance of this step, often sacrifice it for the sake of content knowledge, getting the rest of the project done.

Finally, T-T P noted, "The classroom as a community is a theme that really needs to be realized, and building community among students who feel that their sociolgy or chemistry class is 'real,' but their writing class is not, is the major challenge." As Allen Cox said: ....[Teamwork] which I define as 'managing diversity'....[is] bigger even than vision because, without effective teamwork, there can be no comprehensive vision." Let us listen to the voices of teachers such as T.A., C.S. and T-T.P. as we try to teach our students this type of teamwork.

Related Readings

Brooke, Robert. "The Forest through the Trees: Small-Group Pedagogy and the Development of Writer's Roles." CCCC. Cincinnati, Ohio: March 21, 1992.

Bruffee, Kenneth. "The Way Out." College English 33(1972):457-470.

Cox, Allen. "Consensus is a Killer of Creativity." Chicago Tribune editorial (July 2, 1991) 1:15.

Gere, Anne Ruggles. Writing Groups. Carbondale:SIUP, 1987.

Harris, Muriel. "Composing Behaviors of One- and Multi-Draft Writers." College English 51(1989):174-191.

Hillocks, George, Jr. Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching. Urbana:ERIC, 1986.

Johnson, D.W. and R. Johnson. "The Socialization and Achievement Crisis: Are Cooperative Learning Experiences the Solution?" Applied Social Psychology Annual 4. L. Bickman, ed. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983.

------- & E. Holubec. Cooperation in the Classroom. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, 1988.

Kagan, Spencer. "The Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning." Educational Leadership (December 1989/January 1990): 12-15. The whole issue of Educational Leadership is on the topic of cooperative learning.

Lemburg, Zhuang-Zong. "Views on Collaborative Writing/Learning: A Case Study." CCCC. Cincinnati, Ohio: March 21, 1992.

Lemon, Hallie S. "Collaborative Strategies for Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice." ERIC ED 294 221.

_____. "On the Trail of Character X: A Successful Collaborative Writing Project." Illinois English Bulletin. (1989):63-66.

Lunsford, Andrea and Lisa Ede. Singular Texts/ Plural Authors. Carbondale: SIUP, 1990.

_____. "Why Write Together: A Research Update." Rhetoric Review. 5(1986):71-81

Rawlings, Diane. "Discourse Analysis of Writing Groups: The Implications of Teacher Talk." Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition. State College, Pennsylvania: July 14, 1989.

Rau, W. and B. S. Heyl. "Humanizing the College Classroom: Collaborative Learning and Social Organization among Students." Teaching Sociology. 18(1990): 141-155.

Scheuer, Erika. "How Collaborative is Collaborative Writing?" CCCC. Cincinnati, Ohio: March 21, 1992.

Sheckels, Theodore F. "Improving Peer-Review Groups Based on Research in Small Group Communication: A Literature Review." CCCC. Cincinnati, Ohio: March 19, 1992.

Vietto, Angela. "A Student Examines Peer Critiquing: Another View on Collaborative Learning in Writing." Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition. State College, Pennsylvania: July, 13. 1989.

Wiener, Harvey S. "Collaborative Learning in the Classroom." College English. 48 (1986): 52-61.

Wolf, Thia. "The Teacher as Eavesdropper: Listening in on the Language of Collaboration." The Writing Teacher as Researcher. Donald A. Daiker and Max Morenberg, eds. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton, 1990.

Appendix 1: 1992 CCCC Session M-10 Handout

Classroom Stories: Teachers' Use of Collaborative Learning
by Hallie S. Lemon

Table 1: Tabulation of the surveys from the Western Illinois University Composition Faculty (30), Indiana Teachers of Writing Session (15), K-12 Teachers in District #38 (16) compared with results of surveys taken in 1986 (ERIC ED 294 221).

Use of Collaborative Strategies to Teach Composition

	1986 (N=71)	1991 (N=61)	Comparison
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Table 2: Source of Knowledge of Collaborative Strategies (WIU)

	*T.A.(5)	C.S.(20)	T.&T-T.(7)	Total
Secondary sources**	4	19	6	29
Colleagues	2	19	6	27
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Experience, Serendipity, Trial and Error	3	7	1	11
Other (Classes [3], working with JTPA, women's consiousness-raising workshops, research for dissertation)				6

*T.A.= Teaching Assistants, C.S.= Composition Specialists, T. &T-T.= Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty.

**Weiner (4), Bruffee (4), Lunsford and Ede (3), Bleich (2), Bakhtin, Elbow, Heath, Jaquès, Spears, Tannen.

Almost all of the District #38 teachers mentioned a 15-hour series of 5 workshops on cooperative learning given by the Educational Service Region and for which they were given 1 semester hour's credit on the salary scale; some also mentioned reading and other in-service training(5), classroom experience(3) and teacher interaction. This spring, 26 teachers are participating in the pilot for an Advanced Cooperative Learning Workshop sponsored by our Educational Service Region and paid for by the District.

Table 3: Successes in the Use of Collaborative Strategies (WIU)

	T.A.(5)	C.S.(20)	T&T-T(7)	Total
Invention, generating ideas, reinforcing assignments	4	7	4	14
Peer responses to drafts	1	7	1	9
Sense of community	0	5	2	7
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Table 4: Problems in the Use of Collaborative Learning (WIU)

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Other: Pooling of ignorance (2), absenteeism (2), noise level, problems with use for reading comprehension, difficult to sustain in a computer lab without a network				7

I have also been keeping track since Spring 1988 of the evaluations of students in my second-semester freshman composition course who have <u>voluntarily</u> written their research papers in pairs when given the option. I have a total of 39 responses (OK, that doesn't come out even; Missy didn't turn in her survey!)

Student successes:
Thinking up ideas (29), Sharing the work, easier, making it more enjoyable (26), a better structured paper, better feedback (20), the skills of cooperation, not letting the other person down (11), overcoming writers' block (8), more confidence, understanding of the writing process (4), help with proofreading (4), help with typing (2).

Student Problems:
Figuring out structure, making it fit together (17), getting schedules to fit, finding a time to meet (13), problems in style, transitions (11), deciding who should do what (5), one person doing more(3, finding sources (2), picking a subject.

Bonus Handout

This handout is not part of the original scope of this presentation and will not be discussed, but I thought members of the audience might be interested in the results of an Illinois Association of Teachers of English Workshop, **Collaborative Learning: How to Build a Community of Learners** by Hallie Lemon and Teri Faulkner given in October of 1991. Thirty-two, K-college teachers participated in composing these lists; you will notice much overlap with the results of the 1992 CCCC presentation. Discussion of these findings are forthcoming in Illinois English Bulletin.

Concerns about the Use of Collaborative Learning

Teacher's role: Teachers lose control; lazy teachers may abuse the technique; hard-working teachers may be perceived as coasters; students want the teacher's expertise, so the teacher winds up teaching eight groups instead of one class; traditional methods are more comfortable for those not trained in this technique; it takes more time to set up.

Problems within the Groups: Some groups don't work well together; true loners are not integrated; some students may monopolize the work; low-level students lack enough self esteem to interact comfortably in small groups; it is intimidating to students who suffer stage fright.

Content Presentation: Not as much material can be covered; the time spent teaching students how to work in groups detracts from content presentation; course objectives and goals and accuracy of information are harder to accomplish; it's slower; assessment is more difficult.

Student Reactions to Collaborative Learning: Too much time is spent off task; students learn to listen better in a traditional classroom. Students resist working in groups. It works best with high-level students; students are less comfortable in their role than with traditional methods; the students are confused by shifts in the process; some parents object as do some brighter students.

Physical Problems: Too much noise and confusion are generated, takes too much space, and moves furniture around. Absences are more of a problem.

Conclusions: My five suggestions to address these problems are: 1) increase the amount of time spent in collaborative problems at the beginning stages of the writing process, 2) teach students the social skills necessary in groups, 3) form support groups to synthesize current knowledge and exchange successful strategies, 4) directly address student resistance to group work, and 5) don't sacrifice groups processing activities to cover more content.

Advantages of Collaborative Learning

Teacher's Role: There is less focus on the teacher; puts learning responsibility on the students; teacher becomes an organizer and facilitator, not "sage on the stage"; there are fewer papers to grade; it lessens the view of the teacher as problem solver thereby building student self-esteem; students are accountable to the group instead of the teacher; adds interest for the teacher.

Academic Benefits: Student involvement with and ownership of the material increase; it generates real thinking (critical thinking) and intensifies intellectual involvement; creates more ideas to share, and sharing makes the ideas more attractive; the active learning is better for the attention span of adolescents; material from a learner's point of view is grasped better; students retain the material better; complex ideas are often discussed/learned more in depth and learned by more of the class; better decisions are made because there is more input; they learn better by teaching.

Psychological Benefits: More opportunities exist for shy students to participate; makes learning less stressful and threatening; lower ability and passive students are given an advantage; the learning situation is more relaxed, not as pressured, more positive; self-esteem is increased because students are involved in the answer; it helps slower students stay up with the better students.

Better Motivation: Variety in methods increases interest; learning is more enjoyable; since more people are "teaching," more teaching styles are used, and students are better able to learn; students motivate each other; peer pressure becomes a motivator.

Social Skills: Social skills practiced in groups improve abilities for jobs and for life; opportunities exist to practice verbal skills on a task, students learning through articulation; students learn to work together; it helps avoid some discipline problems and improves behavior through peer discussions of group expectations; it builds speaking and listening skills; strong participatory skills transfer to other classes; it provides leadership practice for students who usually hide within the group; it mirrors real world learning; females are more likely to respond in a small group; students learn to appreciate different points of view.

Community Building: It bonds students to the class and content; there is a feeling of belonging and a better self-concept; there is a feeling of togetherness; individuals become a member of a community.